



HISTORY

OF

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METHODISM IN ALMONDBURY.

BY

RICHARD ROBERTS.

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London :

H. J. TRESIDDER, 17, AVE MARIA LANE, E.C.

SOLD AT THE WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE.

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1864.

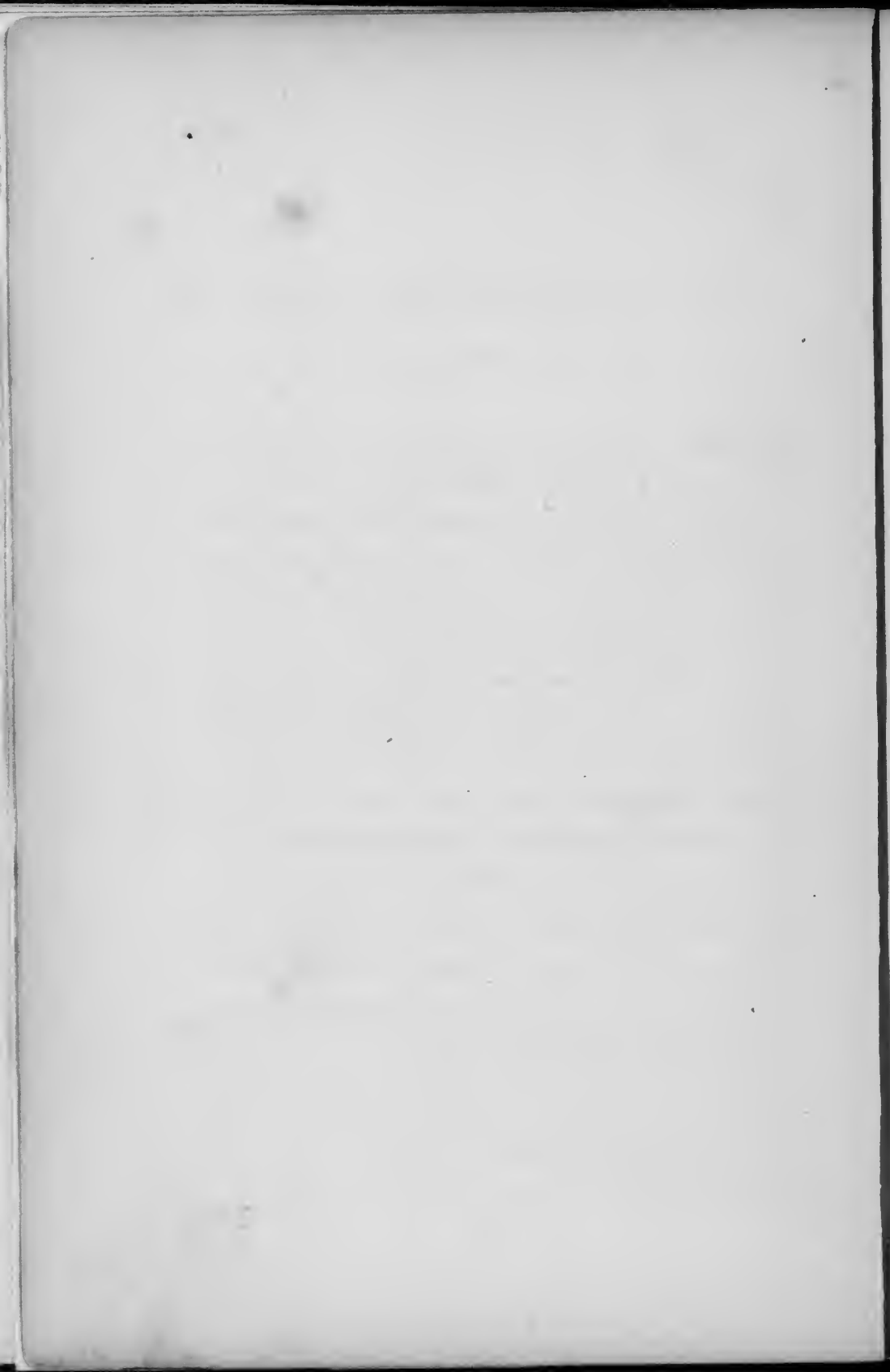
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LONDON:  
PRINTED BY HAYMAN BROTHERS,  
GOUGH SQUARE, E.C.

Wes. 55

## P R E F A C E .

THIS sketch is not expected to command much more than a local interest. It originated in the report read at the Almondbury Chapel Jubilee Meeting. That report contained facts and incidents which the friends thought worthy of being placed in a more permanent form. At the earnest request of the office bearers of the Almondbury Society, the Author, having more material on hand, consented to expand the report into a small memorial volume. He puts forth no claim to originality. His work has been both easy and pleasant. Having access to several unpublished papers and diaries, he has simply compiled and arranged the information; and the humble effort he now prayerfully commends to the blessing of God.



## THE HISTORY OF METHODISM IN ALMONDBURY.

THE advent of Methodism was the advent of a religious revival. Whatever of good existed in the churches of this land then, was feeble, languishing, and ready to die. Methodism like a living breath from heaven swept over the dying embers and revived the languid flame. It was not only a revival of spiritual life, but also an earnest protest against the prevalent abominations of the age. With boldness was its voice uplifted in the corner of the streets, and in places of concourse, to denounce the wickedness of the times. The devil and his vassals were stirred and enraged by this revival of religious earnestness. Reproaches many, and indignities the most foul, were heaped upon the founders of Methodism. Wherever they went they preached the same doctrines, and enjoined the same holiness. But everywhere they found the carnal mind to be enmity against God, and not subject to the law of God; and, consequently, insult and persecution became their portion. For their encouragement, however, they heard a renewal of the Master's admonition—"If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the

world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Undismayed they held on their way; and sent into the heart of the church and of the nation a quickening power which still survives, and which is rapidly spreading over the wide world. These remarks are verified by the history of Methodism in Almondbury.

#### ALMONDBURY

Is situated on the brow of a hill, about two miles from Huddersfield, and is the second place in the Queen Street Circuit. The ascent to it is steep, and testing to both limb and lung. Some historians affirm that King Almond was buried there: others question the statement. If, however, it be true, the circumstance is quite sufficient to account for the name of the place. A little way above the village, crowning the summit of the hill, are the ruins of a castle with triple walls; and which, according to some authorities, was built in the year 1130, by King Stephen. That castle has been the theatre of most atrocious deeds. During the reign of Edward II., there was found the body of a foreigner, bearing evident marks of having been brutally murdered. In 1307, dark suspicions were entertained; and a strict examination of the castle by a jury was authorised, which resulted in the discovery of a dungeon, bearing wretched evidences of frightful barbarities. It is supposed that these discoveries led to a decision to demolish the whole structure; for in the reign of

the third Edward, Almondbury castle was a thing of the past. The present ruins, however, tell of massive grandeur. In bygone days, Almondbury was a place of distinction. It had its markets on Mondays, and courts were also held there. It moreover possessed the dignity of being a city. By some misfortune, it has long lost the prestige of a city, and is now reduced to the humble status of a village, known however by a name which perpetuates the memories of prouder days.

When Methodism started into being, Almondbury was not better than other places, nor yet so good as some. Here, as elsewhere, the tide of spiritual life was at its lowest ebb. Apathy and indifference had locked the energies of a nominal church, and the ministry of the place was lamentably wanting in spiritual power. Huddersfield was at this time more highly favoured. There the ministry of the godly Mr. Venn was producing its gracious results. There also Mr. Wesley on his visit to the neighbourhood was permitted to occupy the church pulpit. Mr. Wesley having full confidence in the efficiency and evangelism of Mr. Venn's ministry, deemed it unadvisable *then* to establish Methodism in Huddersfield. Content to leave the town to its godly vicar, Mr. Wesley acted out his own principle by going, not only to those who needed him, but especially to those who needed him most. His helpers, inheriting his spirit and principle, followed his example; and instead of coveting a position in



the town, directed their zeal and attention to the more needy condition of Almondbury.

#### JOHN MURLIN.

In this obsolete city, containing the dust of a king, the first Methodist sermon was preached in the year 1766, by the REV. JOHN MURLIN, commonly called "the weeping prophet,"—because it was with tears he told the people they were the enemies of the cross of Christ, and entreated them to be reconciled to God. Mr. Murlin was the Superintendent of the Birstal Circuit, which then included what are now the Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Holmfirth, and Denby Dale Circuits. The preacher had been invited by James Lockwood, who also entertained him. The first service was held in the house of Edmund Mellor, at Town End, now occupied by John Sykes. The report of the preacher's arrival having been spread abroad, the cry was raised, "The false prophets are come." The place of meeting having been ascertained, many gathered together to hear the word. The preacher took for his text Acts ii. 38, 39, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Among the hearers was Abraham Moss, who was a regular attendant on Mr. Venn's ministry, and who was regarded as possessing more religious

knowledge than most of his neighbours. Consequently, next morning several persons gathered round Abraham, to ask his opinion of the sermon of the false prophet. He replied, "If he be a false prophet, the Bible is false, and the whole system of doctrine of the Church of England is false also. He takes his text from the Bible, proves all he says from the Bible, and supports all his doctrines by the teachings of the Church of England as found in her homilies and articles." The next sermon was preached by Rev. Parson Greenwood, from Birstal, from the words "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. After this Mr. Murlin paid a second visit, and preached from John iii. 14, 15. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." The next preacher was the Rev. John Pawson, then a young man, but afterwards twice elected to the chair of the Methodist Conference. His text was John i. 12. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." These first four sermons were preached on week days; and the texts were such as to demand a full exposition of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. The results were gratifying. Religious impressions were produced; deep convictions reached some hearts; and a So-

ciety was formed. Among those awakened to a religious concern was

ABRAHAM MOSS,

Who, having listened thoughtfully to the sermons, pondered them over seriously in his heart. Up to this time, Abraham entertained the belief that he was godly and in a state of salvation ; but to his horror he now discovered that his religion was a mere formality, and that the basis of his confidence was his own moral conduct. Having made the humbling discovery that he was a pharisee, he gave himself diligently to the seeking of the right way. He read the Bible, prayed, and regularly attended the preaching services. He now became the subject of petty persecution—was sneered at as the follower of the false prophets. His brother William became bitter and violent in his opposition, and even his mother joined also in the outcry. On one occasion she reasoned earnestly with him, and endeavoured to dissuade him from becoming a Methodist. Abraham, a man of many peculiarities, but a man of strong sterling sense, kindly but firmly replied, “Well, mother, I have rendered you what assistance I could in temporal matters, and am willing to submit to you in all things reasonable ; but the salvation of my soul is to me of the utmost importance, and on that point I can submit to none but God.” This touching appeal disarmed his mother and moved her to tears. Undaunted, he persevered in his religious course, and earnestly

sought the blessing of conscious pardon. While engaged at his trade as shoemaker, and musing on his state and prospects, and with a soul yearning for deliverance, on the morning of Saturday, March 6th, 1769, there was vouchsafed to him the comfortable persuasion, the full assurance of his acceptance with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Honest to his convictions, he made no attempt to conceal the fact; but published abroad with gratitude and joy what great things God had done for him. His mother advised him to tell no one of his experience, because both priests and people would count it perfect madness. The village resounded with the announcement that Abraham Moss was beside himself.

Steady to his purpose, Abraham joined the Society, endured bravely his share of persecution, and became valiant for the truth. After this his brother William soon died, but not before he had seen his error, and repented of the same. His mother lived; and, touched by the same divine power, became a member of the Methodist Society. Eager that others should taste the grace that he had experienced, Abraham opened his house for preaching on Sunday evenings, and himself became a preacher. In this department of service he was earnest, laborious, and useful. Frequently he preached four times on the Lord's day, and many will be the crown of his rejoicing in the day of Christ. Not satisfied to confine his labours to his own village, he carried the gospel which he had experienced to places remote and near, some-

times walking thirty or forty miles on the Sabbath, and preaching twice or thrice. Returning home over moors and mountains after preaching, he on several occasions experienced signal interpositions of Divine Providence. The night was dark and dreary when once he came home by way of Flockton, and unfortunately wandered into a wrong path. He soon discovered his mistake, but knew not how to rectify it. He made a sudden pause; and while testing, as best he could, with stick and feet, the ground around him, he happened to kick a piece of dross or coal, and propelling it forward a few inches, the unmistakeable sound in the abyss below announced to Abraham the frightful fact that he was on the eve of a deep and deserted coal pit, into the depths of which another step would have plunged him.

We think this tribute due to the memory of Abraham Moss, because his name will always be intimately associated with the early history of Methodism in Almondbury. Moreover, it is demanded by his fidelity to the cause of Christ, and his laborious zéal to maintain and extend it in testing times, when the faith of some failed, and the love of many waxed cold.

But to return to the history. The efforts of the first preachers were followed up by James Sydney, a self-denying local preacher, who came once a month from Wakefield, a distance of about twelve miles, to visit the small Society, and to preach to them. Up to the time that Abraham Moss opened his house in December, 1792, no

Methodist preaching had been introduced to Almondbury on the Lord's day. So eagerly, however, did the new-born souls there desire the sincere milk of the word, that not a few of them would walk on the Sabbath to Birstal, Halifax, and even to Leeds, to hear the gospel from their own ministers. The word of the Lord was precious in those days.

#### PERSECUTION

Now set in. Days of darkness and storm came on to test the faith and patience of the little band who had sworn fealty to their Saviour. While their successes rejoiced their hearts, they served only to enrage the foe. The triumphs of religion excited both the alarm and anger of its enemies. Symptoms of uneasiness multiplied among the populace, and violence was threatened, and danger was apprehended. It was deemed both unwise and unsafe to conduct their monthly service any longer at night, lest the threatening mob, availing themselves of the darkness, should invade and molest. Unwilling to provoke needless commotion or to expose themselves to needless peril, prudence dictated that the hour of meeting should be changed to midday. Owing to the infrequency of the services and the violence of the opposition, for the first three years, Methodism made but little progress in Almondbury.

In the year 1770, a chapel was built at Thong, near Holmfirth, and the Rev. William Darney came to reside there by the appointment

of Conference. Mr. Darney visited Almondbury weekly. On his first visit he found seven members in Society; but by the blessing of God on his zealous labours, in four weeks the number increased to thirty-two. This rapid progress made the enemies frantic. Incited by the clergyman of the parish, who announced from the pulpit that his teaching was quite sufficient for their instruction, and that he would not tolerate any other teachers, the people raised a terrible storm of persecution, which threatened the very existence of Methodism in the place. Joseph Kay, constable and parish clerk, was considered then a man of importance, and being thoroughly opposed to the Methodists, he became the willing instrument of the clergyman in the cruel work which followed. One evening, after Mr. Darney had been preaching, Kay came to the house where the preacher was staying, and asked permission to speak to him. The permission was granted. But instead of speaking, the clerk violently seized Mr. Darney, and endeavoured to drag him out and deliver him up to the fury of the mob collected around the door. The friends of the preacher now interposed, and after a desperate struggle succeeded in rescuing him out of the hands of the violent rabble, but not before his coat had been rent from top to bottom. Like a true hero, and undaunted by what had occurred, Mr. Darney was true to his appointment the next week, and preached in the house of Squire Studerth, which had been properly licensed, and

which now is occupied by the co-operative society, a little above the chapel. The text was beautifully appropriate to the troubled Society—"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thess. i. 7—10.) While exhorting the troubled ones to rest in patience until Christ shall come, Constable Kay came in, followed by an excited mob, and holding up his official staff in the face of the preacher, said: "I charge thee in the name of King George to come down." "I charge thee in the name of the King of kings to let me alone," was the reply. Kay made no reply, but, aided by the mob, seized him, dragged him by the hair of his head, and, being corpulent, the venerable man fell heavily on the floor. After a severe scuffle, the friends rescued the preacher from the mob, and succeeded in conveying him to an upper chamber. Thither again the mob rushed; and once more seizing their victim, dragged him pitilessly down the stairs into the street. Becoming still more fierce, they thrust him down, fell upon him, and kicked him unmercifully with their iron-shod clogs. Bruised, exhausted, and bleeding, he managed to rise; but with a combined rush they forced him down the street, frequently inflicting blows which



staggered him. When opposite the parsonage, they put a tenter-bar between his legs and threw him suddenly down. This was a signal for another outrage. They now treated him so barbarously that very serious fears were entertained as to the result. Ultimately he escaped to his lodgings; but not before he had stained the street with his blood, as a testimony against his persecutors. To this inhuman treatment the Methodists of Almondbury would have tamely submitted, had not the friends from Thong interfered and insisted on the necessity of seeking the protection of the law. A deputation of Methodist friends waited upon the Rev. Mr. Zouch, then vicar of Sandal, near Wakefield, and justice of the peace, who gave them a kind reception. Previous to their arrival, letters had been despatched by the clergyman of Almondbury, in which he endeavoured to prejudice the mind of the magistrate against the case. A charge having been preferred against the assailants, Kay the clerk and his accomplices endeavoured to vindicate their conduct by an appeal to the Five Mile Act, passed in the reign of King Charles II. The justice asked Kay why he had brought that act to him. "That act," said the magistrate, "is for thee and thy mob. Mr. Darney is a licensed preacher; and preaching as he did in a licensed house, you might as well have pulled me down when preaching in my own church; and if you do not settle the matter before the quarter sessions, both you and all concerned in this brutal affair

will be transported." ] The persecutors left their home for the trial, fully confident of carrying their cause. They took with them a carrier pigeon, which was to be despatched at the close of the trial with a message tied to its leg to convey to Almondbury the earliest intelligence of their triumph, where arrangements had been made to announce the joyful news to the inhabitants by ringing the church bells. Many an eager glance was cast that day over the valley up the brow of the opposite hill, hoping to see signs of the approach of the fluttering messenger. Every little dark spot that loomed in the distant horizon excited hope, but it was a vain hope. Every lark seen rising high on wing from heather or meadow, to trill his tuneful note in the upper sky, was taken by keen eyes to be the veritable pigeon burdened with joyful tidings. But, alas, there being no success to report, the pigeon brought no message, and was happily spared the trouble of bearing so far her paper burden. While some had their eyes open, many more had their ears open, waiting anxiously to hear the first wave of sound from the antiquated steeple announcing the long-expected news. At length, when patience was exhausted, the defeated party entered the village; not with ringing of bells and shouts of triumph as they had hoped, but under cover of night, slinking away to their homes abashed and chagrined. The tidings of defeat were whispered round from house to house, until all learnt the mortifying fact, that they would have

to retire to rest that night without the salutation of a merry peal of bells.

Persecution in its most violent forms received a momentary check by the recent legal decision; but its spirit was as deeply rooted and as bitter as ever; and occasionally developed itself in painful annoyances. The Rev. Robert Roberts, then on the Birstal Circuit, visited the place, and was entertained at the house of Abraham Moss. When the arrival of the preacher was rumoured abroad, a vulgar mob gathered about the door, and with their violence inflicted considerable damage on the property. Abraham went out to strive to appease their fury; but he found some of them possessed of the bough of a tree, which had been dipped in most offensive filth, and with this they besmeared and belaboured him unmercifully. While this scuffle was going on outside, the inoffensive minister escaped by the back door, under the protection of Abraham Mellor, and found refuge in the house of a publican, where he remained until the way was clear for him to make his escape to Huddersfield. For the sake of peace and safety, the Society had to meet at five on Sunday morning. This was found an inconvenient hour; and, at length, the class wholly failed. In the meantime, class meetings had been established in Fenny Bridge, Newsome, Ashes Common, and other places in the neighbourhood, and to one or other of these the few remaining members at Almondbury had weekly to resort. Methodism became almost extinct,

and Methodist ordinances for a time wholly ceased in Almondbury. This lamentable result was occasioned partly by persecution; partly by the lack of regular preaching services; but chiefly by the spirit of disputation which unhappily set in at this time. The Society at first was made up of persons differing considerably in their theological views, some Calvinists and some Arminians. Every Saturday evening a meeting was held, not for prayer and edification, but for discussing a variety of subjects relating to theology. On one occasion the meeting continued without interruption for twenty-four hours, beginning at seven on Saturday evening, and closing on the Sabbath night at seven. Such meetings could not fail to prove ruinous to the temper and spirituality of the disputants; and the discussions, though well meant at the first, deteriorated into a contest for victory more than for truth.

#### HUDDERSFIELD.

The removal of Mr. Venn from Huddersfield resulted in a division in his congregation. Many of his hearers were Nonconformists in principle. Some had strong tendencies towards Independency and a few towards Methodism. But differing as they did in their opinions, his godly influence, both personal and ministerial, kept them together in the bonds of amity and peace. His ministry was so thoroughly evangelical and practical that it satisfied all whose supreme desire was to honour God by a holy and obedient life.

His successor, a perfect stranger, whoever he might be, was not likely to keep together a congregation composed of persons differing so widely in their opinions of church polity. However much he might wish it, Mr. Venn could not leave as a heritage to his successor the moral power which he had achieved over his people by a long residence, a godly life, and a faithful ministry. Under such circumstances it need not surprise us that a division was the result of his removal. The Dissenters, a tolerably strong party, built for themselves the Highfield Chapel, which on the day of opening was excessively crowded, and which on that account received the nickname of "Squeeze'em." At the same time, Edmund Bray opened his house in Kirkgate for preaching, for the accommodation of the few who preferred Methodism. Unfortunately the house was very smoky, and at times the congregation was so enveloped in clouds that the preacher became a thing invisible, and on this account their place of meeting was vulgarly called "Reek'em." Notwithstanding many disadvantages, much good was done there by the blessing of God, and a foundation laid for much greater good. Not a few have carried with them to heaven many blessed memories in connection with that humble house of worship, where Methodism held its first service in Huddersfield. Ere long, "Reek'em" was found not only inconvenient, but also too small to contain the congregation. A new place became a necessity; and in the year 1776 the Bank Chapel

was built, and opened for divine worship. A goodly number now left Highfield Chapel and joined the Methodist congregation, and on this account the new chapel received the name of "Catch'em," and the hill where it stood is known to this day as "Catch'em Hill." In the Minutes of Conference for 1776 is found the following record relating to the Bank Chapel:—

*Ques.* 23. Our brethren at Huddersfield desire leave to collect money in the neighbouring circuits. May they do it?

*Ans.* Yes; on the terms mentioned in the late Minutes.\* But it is desired, that neither they, nor any other of our builders, set up any Chinese paling.

The opening of Huddersfield Chapel was a great event in the neighbourhood, and important in its results. On the Sabbath, many might be seen wending their way from hamlet and village into the town, to worship God in the new sanctuary, which was generally crowded in the afternoon. As there was no evening preaching then, the people returned home and spent the close of the Lord's day in holding cottage prayer meetings in their respective neighbourhoods. Touched by the inspiration of the services during the earlier part of the day, they went to their work with cheerful and confiding hearts, and the results in some cases were very glorious. Four young men from Newsome were converted; and, becoming

\* See Minutes 1775. Questions 22 and 23.

anxious to do something for the Lord, they resolved to conduct a prayer meeting in their own village. But having no confidence in their own ability to offer prayer extempore, they commenced by reading their prayers. One of them, while thus engaged came to a word which he could not pronounce, and over which he hesitated and stumbled. His father, from another part of the room, lifting up his voice and pronouncing the word for him, helped the youth over his difficulty. From that time the four young beginners resolved to do the best they could without books, and pray as the Spirit might help them. Many of the cottage services were seasons of signal power. At a prayer meeting, held in the house of Matthew Mellor, under the shadow of Castle Hill, more than thirty persons professed to obtain conscious pardon.

A minister having now been appointed to Huddersfield, another effort was made to re-establish Methodism in Almondbury. This was most desirable, not only for the sake of the place itself, but also for the sake of the hamlets and smaller villages already named in the immediate vicinity, and into which prayer meetings and class meetings had been introduced. Almondbury, on account of its large population and central position, formed a most convenient place of gathering, for the people from these other places. Monthly preaching was again commenced; but the man at whose house the service was held, being a strong Calvinist, had no deep and earnest sympathy

with Methodism, so that this second effort proved a failure, and the service was discontinued. In the year 1780, Huddersfield for the first time appears on the Minutes of Conference as the head of a circuit. But it had to pass through troublous times. Before the close of the last century a violent agitation rent the Huddersfield Society; resulting in the alienation from Methodism of the Bank Chapel, and of nearly all the people worshipping in it. Methodism in Huddersfield had to commence afresh without a chapel, and with only seven or eight persons in Society in the town. The circuit then included a part of what is now Barnsley Circuit, the whole of Denby Dale, Holmfirth, and two Huddersfield Circuits. From the year 1797 to the year 1802, by reason of the unhappy strife, the members in the circuit were reduced from 1,700 to 520. Cast down, but not destroyed; scattered, but not annihilated; Methodism retained its vitality. The few who remained faithful, although for a season in the dust, struggled bravely with difficulties, and by the help of God mastered them. An appeal was made to the Conference; and in the Minutes of 1798 we have the following record:—

*Ques.* What can we do for our brethren who have had their chapels and houses taken from them?

*Ans.* This year we will assist Nottingham and Huddersfield, as they are places of the greatest importance. First, by subscribing something handsome ourselves: and secondly, by dividing the



kingdom between these two places, and making a public collection in all our chapels, as soon as convenient after the first quarter-day. The following districts are appointed for Nottingham:—London, Northampton, Norwich, Bristol (except Bristol itself), Salisbury, Plymouth Dock, Redruth, Wales, York, and Grimsby. And the following districts are appointed for Huddersfield:—Birmingham, Chester, Manchester, Halifax, Leeds, Whitby, Whitehaven, and Newcastle.

And forthwith the noble sum of £77 13s. was subscribed by the preachers, then present in the Conference,\* to be equally divided between the Nottingham and Huddersfield new chapels. Other preachers not at the Conference sent subscriptions amounting to £15 11s. 6d. Many more subscribed when the collection was made in their respective circuits. We have no means at present, of ascertaining the amount realized by the public collections; but, judging from the liberal gifts of the preachers, there is every reason to believe that Huddersfield is indebted for very considerable aid from the Connexion in the erection of the old Queen Street Chapel.

### THIRD ATTEMPT.

Methodism having now recovered its strength and position in the town, by the erection and opening of this new chapel, a vigorous effort was made, a third time, to establish a cause in Almond-

\* For names and amounts, see Minutes, 1798, page 432.

bury. A class was commenced in the house of Matthew Lodge at Bank End, under the leadership of Abraham Moss. Afterwards it was removed into Almondbury, and met in the house of John Dobson, whose wife was eminently devoted, and in her labours of love signally useful. In addition to the class meeting, prayer meetings were held in her house on Sunday evenings, and preaching every alternate Sabbath morning. The little Society was soon bereaved of the godly influence and faithful service of this Christian woman, by her removal to a higher world. After this, the services were conducted in the house of Charles Whittell. God gave His blessing, and the Society increased. Mr. Benjamin Cocker, then a young, active man, was appointed leader, and in a few months became a local preacher, devoting himself with a laudable zeal to the work of the Lord. He spent a long life in active usefulness, and in earnest sympathy with Christ and his cause, and on the last Sabbath in May, 1861, peacefully passed away into the enjoyment of the unending Sabbath of heaven.\*

Public prejudice had now very considerably abated, the Sabbath services were also more frequent and regular, and the congregation so increased, that the house of Charles Whittell became too small to contain it. The question of providing additional accommodation was often raised in conversation among the people. Many were hopeful; some were timid. The pressing necessi-

\* See Memoir, Sixpenny Wesleyan Magazine, December, 1863.

ties of the case led some to advocate the erection of a chapel. Some ridiculed the very thought; and others considered it quite impracticable. At length, a meeting was convened at Benjamin Cocker's house, which was attended by the ministers and a few Huddersfield friends. Some thought the money-difficulty insuperable, as the people were mostly poor. Others advocated building in faith, raising what money they could, and leaving the remainder as a debt on the premises. One of the ministers intimated, with considerable emphasis, that if they built it by faith they would have to pay for it by works. The meeting, however, at length resolved to enter upon the undertaking. Prompt measures were adopted, and liberal sums were then promised by the members of the meeting. The Rev. James Sykes; A. Moss, and B. Cocker, were appointed to canvass the neighbourhood for subscriptions; and Mr. S. Midgley, was appointed to wait on Mr. Battye to solicit a suitable site. As Mr. Battye was not a Methodist, considerable fears were entertained that he would promptly refuse to allow a chapel to be built on any part of his land. With these fears uppermost in the mind, a few friends met together to pray that God would direct their steps, remove difficulties, and succeed their efforts. Upheld by these prayers, Mr. Midgley made his appeal, and was successful. A site having been secured, the whole village was canvassed from door to door for subscriptions. The work was commenced without delay; and the foundation stone was laid, in July,

1814, by Mr. Joseph Thornton, the father of the Rev. W. L. Thornton, M.A., the President of the Methodist Conference in the year 1864. The original estimate was £700, but as the work proceeded, the opinion became prevalent that the chapel would be too small. An enlargement of the original plan was decided upon at an additional cost of £350. Long before the chapel was completed services were held in it. The first was a prayer meeting, held at six on Christmas morning, in the year 1815, when 300 persons were present. In the afternoon of the same day, the first sermon was preached by Mr. John Winterburn, father of the Rev. William Winterburn. The following Sabbath, the Rev. Abraham Stead, then a young man, preached morning and afternoon. A prayer meeting was announced for the evening; but the Rev. George Sargent, who had been preaching at Cowms, and having no evening appointment, came over and offered to preach if they would try and get him a congregation. The challenge was accepted, the village was divided into four districts, and in every house the announcement of the preaching was made, and an invitation given. The unfinished sanctuary was soon thronged in every part, and Divine power accompanied the word. Several were awakened during that service; and among others, Benjamin Dawson who has ever since been a faithful and devoted member, and for many years a leader, local preacher, and town missionary. The chapel, although occupied at Christmas, was formally

opened on Whit-Sunday in the following year (1816), when sermons were preached by the Revs. D. McNicoll, and W. McKitrick. The entire expenditure, including extras, amounted to £1,155. By subscriptions and opening collections the sum of £350 was raised, leaving a debt on the chapel of £805. The Society now rapidly increased; and within a year the numbers advanced from twenty-four to one hundred. For a few years the annual income of the chapel averaged £80; so that, notwithstanding the heavy debt, the trustees were enabled to meet all expenses.

#### THE FIRST SABBATH-SCHOOL

In Almondbury was commenced in 1808, in a room hired for the purpose adjoining the Rose and Crown Inn. Being unsectarian, both Churchmen and Methodists joined in its management. It is a remarkable incident in connection with the earlier history of this school, that it employed two *paid* agents, each receiving two shillings a day for his services. Many others rendered their services gratuitously. Success crowned their efforts. The number of scholars having reached three hundred, a larger room became necessary. This want was met by all denominations engaging in a united effort, which resulted in the erection of the old National-school. In the old room, Methodists were in the habit of opening and closing the school with singing and prayer, and of delivering addresses to the children. These duties were performed more frequently by Meth-

odists than by others, their peculiar training having given them a greater fitness for these public exercises than their co-workers. But when they entered the new premises the Clergyman objected to the continuation of this practice. Although the Methodists had contributed liberally towards the new building, they were now forbidden to take their accustomed part in the more public duties of the school. This arbitrary prohibition, as might be expected, resulted in disaffection, strife, and ultimately division. Many of the teachers, indignant at the insult offered to the hard-working Methodists, protested against the injustice. But the protest was unheeded. And as they would not submit to be wholly ignored in the conduct of a school in which they had toiled so patiently and assiduously, they resolved themselves into a committee for the purpose of establishing a purely Methodist school. The children and their parents sympathised to such a degree with the injured party, that, immediately after the division so few as twelve scholars have been seen marched down from the old National-school to the Church on the Lord's day. Vigorous efforts were now made by the Methodists to establish a school of their own. Subscriptions having been raised, a large room was hired in Mr. Farrand's warehouse; which, early on the first Sabbath morning, was consecrated by the united and earnest prayers of teachers and scholars, a large number of whom assembled together devoutly to thank God for so far opening their way, and to

pray for a still richer blessing on their labours in the new school. Those prayers were not in vain : God heard them and favoured His servants with gratifying success for years. At length the room was required by the owner for business purposes, and required promptly. This occasioned much perplexity. And as no room large enough could be obtained in the village, some of the classes met in a private room, some in the vestry, and some in the chapel. This arrangement was found to be most inconvenient and undesirable. The interests of the school could not be maintained and a declension was inevitable. Unwilling to lose their hold of the young, and to abandon the ground gained with so much difficulty, the friends resolved to erect a school for themselves, where they would not be liable again to ejection. With one heart they gave themselves to the work, and the task was speedily accomplished. On Good Friday, in the year 1824, they had the joy of seeing the new school adjoining the chapel formally opened ; when two sermons were preached by the Rev. David Stoner, and collections made. Here the work of Christian instruction was carried on for years with great success. In the year 1832, the school was visited with some very gracious and special tokens of God's presence and power. Several of the elder scholars received the Spirit of awakening, and consecrated themselves to the service of Christ. So precious and powerful were these visitations of grace, that, at one time, the Society in Almondbury owed two-

thirds of its number to the Sunday-school agency. In the course of some years, these premises became too small, and applications for admission into the school had to be declined. Their success once more became their difficulty. How to meet the growing demands of the times became a serious question with them. But casting themselves upon the experience of the past, and remembering how God had already brought them through difficulties equally great, they gathered confidence, and with a cheerful heart addressed themselves to a new enterprise which would involve very considerable expenditure. In right down good earnest they went a-begging again; and in Huddersfield they obtained £80. If the truth were all told, it would be found that they did not confine themselves to the limit of their own circuit, but went poaching into other people's preserves; for we learn that Mr. Walker, of Bradford, gave them £12. The result of the whole, however, was the obtaining of additional ground, and the erection of the present eligible and commodious premises in the chapel-yard, where now is conducted the most flourishing and numerous school in the Queen Street Circuit.

#### CHAPEL EMBARRASSMENT.

Having given a brief sketch of school history, we now return to chapel affairs. In fifteen years after the opening, the income from the pews was reduced from £80 to £31 annually, occasioning much embarrassment, and resulting in an increase



of the debt. During these years they experienced some gracious revivals, and accessions were made to the Society, and yet the income of the chapel diminished. This is accounted for by the simple fact that, while they devoted themselves earnestly to promote the spiritual welfare of the people and a revival of the work of God, they seriously neglected the financial interests of the trust property. For this neglect they were punished with a growing debt, which threatened them with financial ruin. Seasons of gracious visitation and prosperity were the times for them to grapple with the debt, and to devise plans for its reduction. But the old Methodists, somehow or other, did not believe in this philosophy. Had any one suggested it to them during a great revival, we can guess what their reply would be: "No, one thing at once. We are doing a great work, we cannot come down to the consideration of money matters now." It is, however, to be hoped that modern Methodists are learning lessons of wisdom from the experience of their ancestors. In the year 1832, the Rev. Dr. Hannah, then superintendent of the circuit, felt that the debt had assumed serious proportions, and must be grappled with. Plans were proposed for its reduction, and the following sums were raised:—

Grant from the Queen Street Trust, Hud-

dersfield . . . . .	£150	0	0
Mr. William Johnson, Almondbury . . . . .	108	5	10½
Mr. Abraham Mellor, „ . . . .	100	7	4
Mr. Charles Taylor, „ . . . .	41	0	0
Mrs. Farrand, „ . . . .	10	0	0

Mr. Johnson, Timber Merchant . . .	10	0	0
Mr. Benjamin Cocker, Sen. . . . .	10	0	0
Mrs. Walker . . . . .	10	0	0
Almondbury Chapel Stewards. . . .	9	5	11
Public Collections . . . . .	9	4	2
Mr. Luke Noble, Dalton . . . . .	5	0	0
Mr. John Taylor, Newsome . . . . .	5	0	0

Making a total of £468 3s. 3½d., thus reducing the debt to £400. This was felt to be a great relief to the burdened and troubled minds of many. Fears now gave way to confidence, and cheerfulness took the place of despondency. Hope revived, and paralyzed energies felt the throbbings of a new life. The results were soon manifest in quickened activities and growing zeal. The congregation improved, the work revived, and souls were saved. The people brought their offerings into the treasury, and tried God *herewith*, and God honoured them by an outpouring of blessing which resulted in both quickening and extension. God met their liberal gifts with a liberality of spiritual blessing. They gave money, and God gave grace with a Divine munificence.

There is one name worthy of special note in this record—the name of

#### ABRAHAM MELLOR.

Few men, if any, felt a deeper interest in Almondbury Methodism than he. Few, if any, laboured so assiduously and unostentatiously as he in various departments of service. While the chapel was being built, the spare hours of each

day were devoted gratuitously by Abraham to assist in digging the foundation, and in a variety of ways helping forward the building. When subscriptions were solicited for the reduction of the debt, although a poor working man, Abraham gave the princely sum of one hundred pounds, being more than the half of all he possessed. Without disparaging the other givers, it may be said that Abraham gave more than they all. He was a man of exemplary piety, a pattern to believers, regular and punctual in his attendance upon the means of grace. But good people sometimes have their crotchets, and Abraham had his. When the old singing pew around the pulpit was removed, and the communion rails substituted, Abraham strongly objected to the change, and thought it was only the fruit of the pride of a race of Methodists younger than he. His prejudices on this point were deep and lasting. For some years he could not be induced to kneel at the communion rail, lest he should seem to give countenance to spiritual pride. He looked with jealousy, and with some degree of horror, upon the improved kneeling place, and especially upon the crimson cushions. Well, it was a weakness, but a very pardonable one in a man whose character was so pure and guileless. Moreover, the error was one of judgment, and not of the heart. Better that the crotchet should be in the head than deeper down. A twist in the brain is not so bad as a twist in the heart. Abraham's heart was all right, and in the long run overcame his

scruples. Unwilling to be deprived any longer of the Christian privilege of commemorating the death of the Saviour he loved so well, his better feelings at length obtained the mastery over his faulty judgment. The struggle was painful and somewhat long, but the victory was on the right side at the last. It was a relief to the dear old man, and a joy to his friends, when the scruples were mastered and he was found kneeling on the hateful crimson cushion. His eminent consistency secured for him the esteem of the most ungodly in the village. Among the irreligious it was a common saying—"If there be a good man in Almondbury, it is Abraham Mellor." Scoffers and sceptics would say, "If there be such a thing as a Christian, Abraham Mellor is one." Such a testimony is infinitely more precious and more enduring than having his name engraven on proud marble.

#### LIQUIDATION OF CHAPEL DEBT.

After the reduction of the debt in 1832, the chapel income so improved that there was an annual surplus, which in a few years enabled the trustees to cancel another portion of the debt, and thereby to reduce it to £238. Encouraged by these successes, alterations and improvements were introduced. The recess behind the pulpit was erected, and an organ placed there, at an expense of £329. As only a portion of this amount was raised, the debt was again increased to the sum of £450. This was soon felt to be a burden

and hindrance to the progress of the work. When the connexional Chapel Loan and Extension Fund was established, the friends, desirous of availing themselves of the proffered help from this fund, started a movement for the entire liquidation of the debt. Advised and encouraged by the Rev. Isaac Denison, then superintendent of the circuit, they devised liberal things. The movement so auspiciously commenced under Mr. Denison was taken up vigorously by his successor, the Rev. Richard Ray, who, by indefatigable labour and judicious management, carried the scheme to a successful issue. Subscriptions were raised, and a bazaar was held, by which they realised £103. Mr. Ray obtained from the Chapel Committee £70 final grant, and £140 loan without interest, to be paid back in ten yearly instalments, on condition of the total extinction of the debt. The proposal was accepted; and the end was speedily accomplished; for in June, 1857, the last promissory note held from the trustees of the Almondbury Wesleyan Chapel was paid and cancelled. In 1864, their jubilee year, they have the joy of paying off the last instalment of the loan, being three years earlier than contemplated by the original engagement.

#### PRESENT STATE AND PROSPECTS.

In the year 1861 it pleased God to visit the Society and congregation with special tokens of grace. At this time the Rev. N. Curnock, jun., was supplying the place of the Rev. Dr. Jobson

during his absence on his important mission to Australia. Mr. Curnock devoted special attention to Almondbury, spent a considerable portion of his time there in visiting from house to house and inviting the people to come and hear the word. He did the work of a home missionary, did it well and successfully. Many attended the services who had been accustomed to spend their Sabbaths in idleness, pleasure, and sin. The preached word was with power; and some notorious characters were smitten by the truth and renewed by the Spirit of grace. After this, some untoward events occurred, which seriously impaired the high tone of religious feeling; so that for the last three years it has been a season of religious dearth, both ministers and people having to mourn the lack of converting power. Almondbury presents a most desirable field for missionary agencies, and we believe would amply repay cultivation. With a population of two thousand in the village, there are only two places of worship—the church and the Wesleyan chapel. Both congregations at any given time will scarcely number four hundred adults, and we believe that ordinarily three hundred would be a more correct estimate. The only Sabbath evening service is held in the chapel, and the ordinary congregation seldom exceeds one hundred; on special occasions it may reach two hundred. After nearly a century of Methodist labours the Society numbers very little more than one hundred; and we believe that this is chiefly attributable to the inadequate

amount of ministerial labour bestowed upon the place. Irreligiousness is awfully prevalent; and we fear that below the surface of things there is a vast amount of secret infidelity. Some, also, have been drawn away from the faith by the juggleries and follies of spiritualism, so called. But we still believe in the old Gospel as the remedy, the only remedy, for these wide-spread and deeply-rooted evils. With the present number of circuit ministers, and the claims of other places in the circuit, more ministerial labour cannot fairly be allotted to Almondbury. What is wanted is a young active minister resident among them, with a passion for saving souls, who, released from ordinary circuit work, shall devote himself to visit the entire population, organise cottage prayer meetings, preach to them every Sabbath, and by kindness and entreaty induce them to attend the house of God. Such a minister would find himself upheld by a noble staff of prayer leaders, all willing and able to work. All they want is a head, a guiding mind, to organise an attack on the citadel of the devil.

#### THE JUBILEE.

The Conference of 1864 was held in Bradford; and as several of the Conference ministers were entertained in Huddersfield, it was thought a very favourable opportunity for celebrating the Jubilee of the chapel, it being fifty years precisely since the foundation stone was laid by Mr. Thornton. On Tuesday, 2nd August, a public meeting was held,

when the Rev. J. H. Lord, superintendent of the circuit, occupied the chair, and a report was read containing an epitomised history of Methodism in Almondbury for the past century. The chapel was thoroughly filled with an excited audience. Very effective addresses were delivered by the Revs. John Walton, Joshua Mason, and Ishmael Jones. Messrs. Benjamin Dawson and Robert Siddell, two of the oldest trustees, greatly delighted the people in rehearsing a few interesting pages of their own experience in connection with Almondbury Methodism. It was a memorable meeting. The excitement was great, but it was of the right kind. A deep and hallowed feeling pervaded the congregation; and many lovers of Zion went home that night hoping and believing that it was the earnest of good yet to come, the dawn of a brighter day, the precursor of days of power and grace, such as Almondbury had often been blessed with. The aged, of which there were not a few, whose memories carried them back into a far past, felt much of thankfulness, while the young were touched and stirred by the rehearsal of their forefathers' sufferings and noble daring in the establishment of Methodism in their native village. Happy memories rushed upon many, blended doubtless with some that were sorrowful. But joy was in the ascendancy that night. It behoved us to be jubilant on our Jubilee. And so we were. Many there were who looked upon that sanctuary as their spiritual birth-place. Well they remembered their hour



of penitence, and their struggles with unbelief, and gratefully did they remember the victory, when, as newly-freed captives, they gave utterance to the feelings of their overflowing hearts in some lofty ode of blessing. The review of the past seemed to inspire all with sentiments of gratitude. Remembering the wonderful providence by which Methodism was introduced there—how sorely it had been tried, and yet how graciously preserved; remembering the brave men who nobly suffered there in the cause of their Master, and how the grace of God was magnified in them; remembering also the numbers which, through the agency of Methodism had been converted there, some still on earth but more in heaven; many hearts felt prompted to rear their Ebenezer memorials, and inscribe thereon “Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.”



